

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED UPGRADE OF ROUTE R61 SECTION 2: DRAAIRIVIER (KM 29.4) TO ELINUS FARM (KM 42.2)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT



DEA REFERENCE 12/12/20/2360

GARR/thor

BID No: 434901

August 2011

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

An environmental Basic Assessment (BA) has commenced to assist the South African National Roads Agency Limited (SANRAL) in determining the extent and significance of the environmental consequences associated with the proposed upgrade of the National Route R61 Section 2: Draairivier (Km 29.4) to Elinus Farm (Km 42.2) between Graaff-Reinet and Cradock in the Eastern Cape.

Notice of a Basic Assessment Process is given in terms of regulation 54(3) of the regulations published in Government Gazette No. R543 under Section 24(5) of the National Environmental Management Act (Act No.107 of 1998), of intent to carry out the proposed activity.

Issues of concern and potential environmental and social impacts will be evaluated during the Basic Assessment process.

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to provide a brief description of the project and process that will be followed and to obtain initial comments and contributions from Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) on the issues relating to the proposed development.

Findings of the Basic Assessment, including concerns raised by IAPs, will be submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) for consideration.

IAPs are hereby invited to comment on the environmental, social and economic issues relating to the proposed upgrading of the R61 road. Your comments will ensure that relevant issues are evaluated and will form part of the Assessment. Kindly complete the registration form at the end of this document and send (either via email, post or fax) to Robyn Thomson at SRK Consulting, to register your interest in the proposed activity and provide your input.

Your comment on this document must reach SRK Consulting by **12:00 on 15 September 2011**.

Robyn Thomson
SRK Consulting
P O Box 15739, Beacon Bay, 5205
Fax: (043) 748 1811
E-mail: rthomson@srk.co.za

DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

The proposed project includes the rehabilitation and upgrade of the Route R61 Section 2 between Graaff-Reinet and Cradock. Section 2 commences at the intersection of R61 with National Route N9 about 30km north of Graaff-Reinet and ends at the intersection of R61 with National Route N10 about 5km north of Cradock. The project commences at km 29.4 on Section 2 where the R61 passes over the Draairivier beyond Wapadsberg Pass and extends to km 42.2 at the access to Elinus Farm.

The existing R61 consists of a surfaced carriageway about 6.7m wide flanked by gravel shoulders about 1.8m wide making the road prism width about 10.3m. The road reserve is generally about 25m wide.

The road section is located in gently rolling terrain with long, straight sections connected by relatively flat horizontal curves.

Five bridge structures are located along the section at the following river crossings:

- Draairivier (km 29.4)
- Tributary of the Great Fish River (km 34.2)
- Tributary of the Great Fish River (km 35.4)
- Great Fish River (km 40.1)
- Beletskloofspruit (km 42.25)

The road width between kerbs across the river structures is 10.0m. The road prism will be widened by 3.2m to achieve a road cross section consisting of 7.4m surfaced carriageway flanked by 2.5m shoulders of which 1.0m will be surfaced. Because the existing cuts and fills along the road are not high, the work required for the widening will not be extensive.

The existing base layer and surfacing will be broken up and new material added to provide a rehabilitated cement stabilised subbase layer. The base layers will be constructed over the subbase layer using crushed stone material imported from a commercial source, probably at Cradock.

Existing pipes and culverts will require extension to accommodate the wider road. The existing bridge decks will need to be widened to achieve a width of 12.4m between kerb faces. The overall widening with new balustrades will be of the order of 2.8m which might be achievable by adding cantilevers on the bridge deck without having to extend the bridge piers and abutments. The technical feasibility of using cantilevers is being investigated by Kayad Knight Piesold Engineers. The alternative to this would be to extend the bridge piers.

It is envisaged that the widening of the road and bridges will be achieved without having to widen the existing road reserve.

Assessments will also be done for the utilisation and development of borrow pits along the road for the supply of sub base material. An application will be submitted to the Department of Mineral Resources.

Interested and Affected Parties are hereby invited to identify potential environmental issues that may be relevant to this proposed development.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The BA process for this assessment will be conducted in accordance with Government Gazette No. R543 in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) Environmental Impact Assessment regulations.

The National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) EIA regulations list activities that may have a significant impact on the environment, and which consequently require authorisation from the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). The regulations further specify the assessment process, and the information, that is required to enable DEA to make a decision regarding the activity.

The following main activity (as a minimum), listed under the NEMA EIA regulations (GNR 544) as requiring a Basic Assessment, is associated with the expansion of the road:

39) The expansion of bridges within a watercourse where such expansion will result in an increased development footprint.

WHAT IS A BASIC ASSESSMENT?

A Basic Assessment is a planning and decision-making tool that is used to identify the environmental consequences of a proposed project, before the development takes place.

A Basic Assessment needs to show the authorities (DEA) and the proponent (SANRAL) what potential environmental, economic and social impacts can be expected from the proposed activity. Public issues and concerns must therefore be identified so that these can be evaluated. If required, the authorities will request that a full EIA be done to determine the extent of those impacts. In the case where an activity will have minimal impact on the environment, the authorities can grant authorisation based on the Basic Assessment Report.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is the cornerstone of the Environmental Assessment process. The principles of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) govern most aspects of Basic Assessments, including public participation. These include the ongoing provision of sufficient information (in a transparent manner) to Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs).

During the Public Participation Process, input from the proponent, technical experts, government authorities and the general public will be gathered to result in a better understanding of the project for all involved, and more informed decision-making throughout the process.

The key objective of public participation during the Basic Assessment Process is for IAPs to raise issues of concern and suggestions that need to be addressed in the Basic Assessment.

IAPs will be provided with a 30-day comment period in which to raise issues and / or concerns in response to the Background Information Document. A draft Basic Assessment Report will be compiled and will also be available for public comment for a period of 40 days. The Final Basic Assessment Report including Comments and Responses from the public will be submitted to DEA following the second public comment period. IAPs will be notified in writing of any decisions made by DEA after submission of the final Basic Assessment Report.

Please note that communications regarding the process and the availability of reports will only be sent to registered Interested and Affected Parties. To register for the process, and thus receive further communications regarding this development, please register by sending the signed registration sheet at the back of this document, together with your contact details and nature of interest, to SRK Consulting.

EIA PROCESS

Who is doing the Basic Assessment?

In terms of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations, an independent Environmental Assessment Practitioner must be appointed to conduct the Basic Assessment. SRK Consulting has been appointed to conduct the Basic Assessment. SRK will identify and assess the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed activity by conducting an objective and independent Basic Assessment in which all the relevant information and opinions of Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) will be collected and passed on to the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). In this way an informed decision-making process can take place.

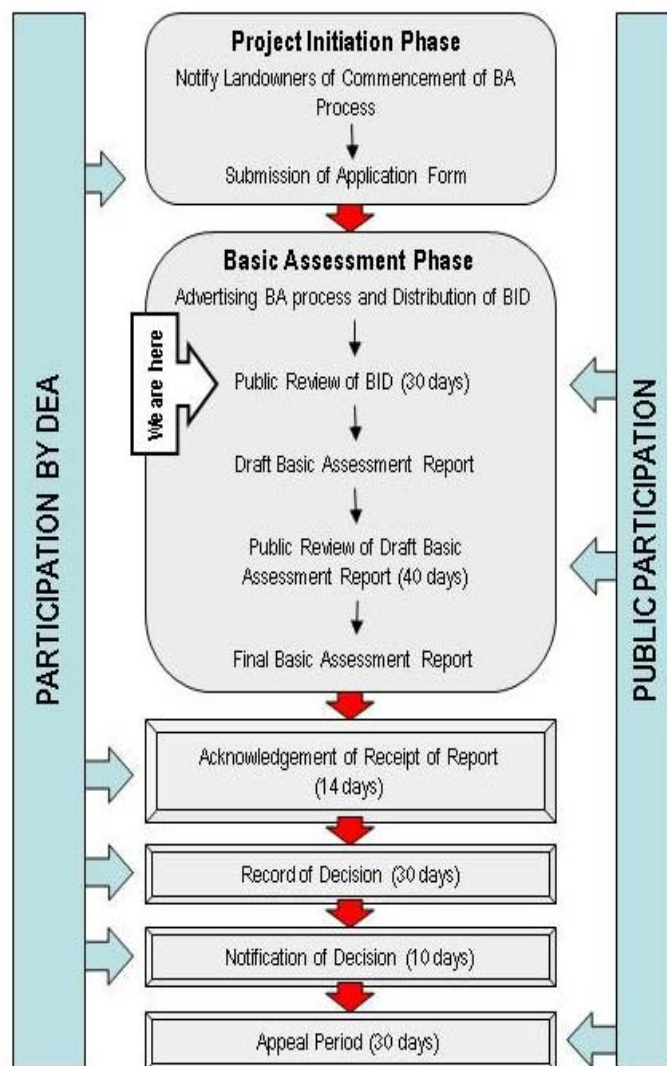
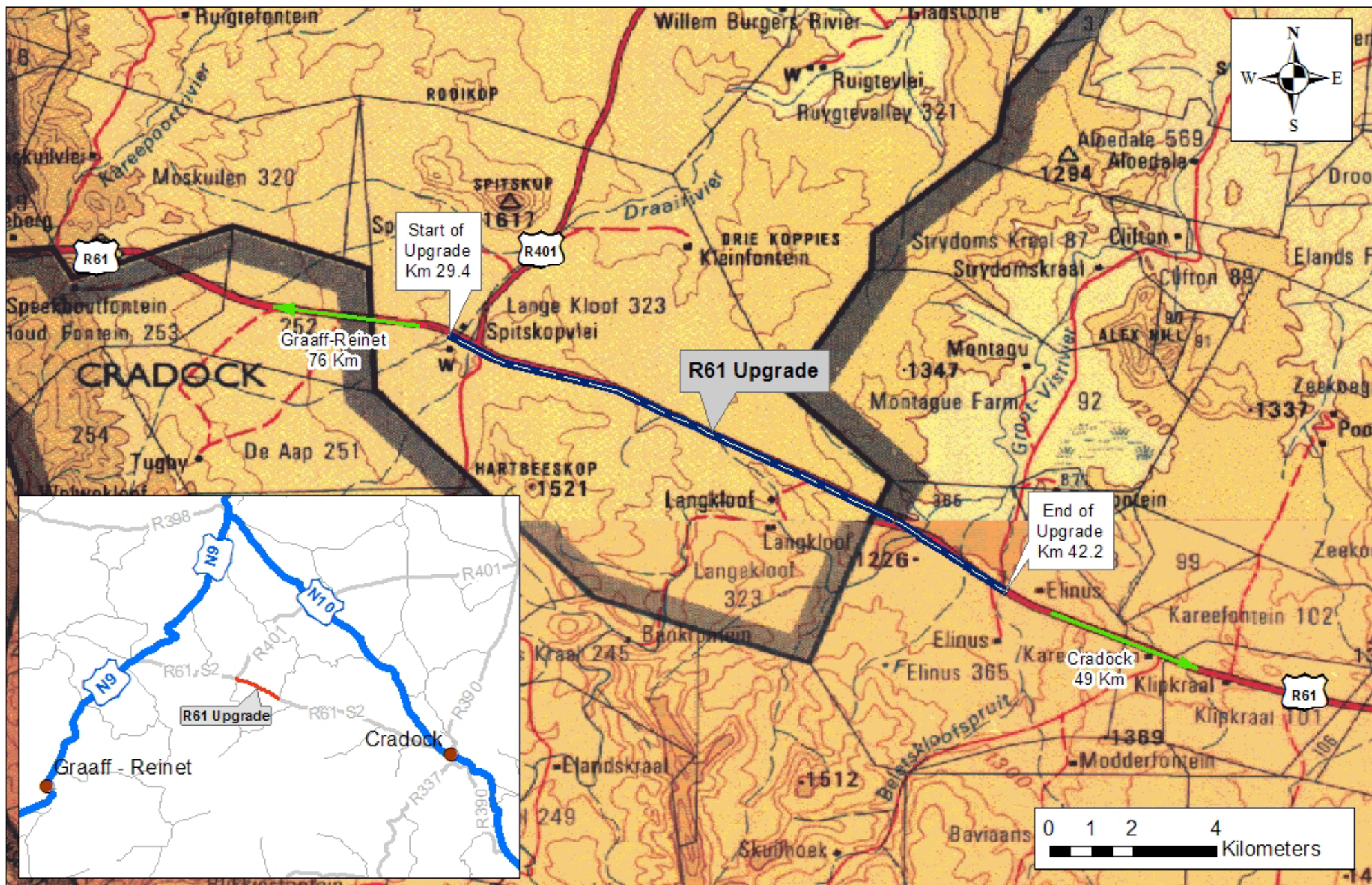


Figure 1: The Basic Assessment Process and stages where public comment will be invited



| | |
|-------------|------------------------|
| Project No: | Datum: |
| 434901 | HH1994 |
| | Projection: |
| | DD |
| | Central Meridian/Zone: |
| | N/A |

NATIONAL ROAD R61 SECTION 2 UPGRADE LOCALITY

| | |
|--------------|------------------|
| Date: | Scale: at A4 |
| 15/08/2011 | 1:120,000 |
| Compiled by: | Fig No: |
| THOR | 001 |
| Revision: A | Date: 15/08/2011 |



REGISTRATION & COMMENT SHEET

BASIC ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE PROPOSED UPGRADE OF ROUTE R61 SECTION 2: DRAAIRIVIER TO ELINUS FARM

I wish to register as an Interested and Affected Party and/or bring to the attention of SRK Consulting the following comments (please use additional sheets of paper if required).

Attention: **Robyn Thomson**

Fax no: **043 748 1811**

(In order for your contact details to be captured on our database - Please fill out the sheet below)

Name of Respondent:

Title:

Organisation / Company:

Nature of Interest:

Postal Address:

Postal Code:

Telephone Number:

Facsimile Number:

Mobile Number:

Email:

Signed: _____

Date: _____